

## Chapter 5: Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

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King County Parks and Recreation Division's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) supports the acquisition, construction and rehabilitation of regional and rural parks, regional trails and recreational facilities. The CIP emphasizes projects that are consistent with the *Parks and Recreation Division Business Transition Plan*, which contains a number of key policy directions for the division, such as specifically calling for King County to pursue strategic acquisitions.

The capital budget development process is guided by six priority criteria and consistent with available funding sources:

- Projects which address safety related issues
- Projects which preserve the county's role as the steward of regional parks, recreation facilities and trails
- Projects which generate additional funds to support agency operations
- Projects which provide partnerships that enhance recreation opportunities
- Projects which allow for implementation of new programs/activities without new maintenance costs
- Projects which provide incentives for the transfer of parks in the UGA

Appendix VII presents additional acquisitions considerations for King County when evaluating potential open space acquisitions.

### 5.1 Funding

Funding for park and trail development, recreation facilities and acquisition projects comes from a variety of revenue sources described in this section. The budget process for the operating budget and projected six-year CIP occurs annually and involves the public, the King County Executive, the King County Council, staff, and occasionally, consultant expertise.

The primary sources of funding for Parks' CIP include:

- *Parks Expansion Levy*: A property tax levy of 5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value was approved by King County voters in 2007, to be collected for six years, beginning in January 2008. Sixty percent of the revenue generated by this levy is allocated to King County for the purpose of acquiring open space and natural lands, acquiring critical links and developing the regional trails system, and providing capital funding through the Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) program. The levy expires at the end of 2013.
- *Real Estate Excise Tax #1*: Under state law, REET funds may be spent on specified types of capital projects. REET 1 funds may be spent on capital projects for "planning, acquisition, construction, reconstruction, repair, replacement, rehabilitation, or improvement of parks; recreational facilities; [and] trails." A real estate sales tax of .25 percent is collected in unincorporated King County.
- *Real Estate Excise Tax #2*: Under state law, REET 2 funds may be spent on capital projects for "planning, construction, reconstruction, repair, rehabilitation, or improvement of parks". The King County Code further defines the use of REET 2 allowing their use only for "planning, construction, reconstruction, repair, rehabilitation or improvement of parks located in or providing a benefit and open to residents of the unincorporated area of King County."
- *Conservation Futures Tax (CFT)*: A countywide property tax of 6.25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Revenues may be used solely for acquisition of open space, agriculture, and timber lands. This source cannot be used to acquire park sites for active recreation.

- *Partnerships:* The Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) Program leverages county funds typically through a use agreement in which a community-based partner or sports organization contributes funding or in-kind donations toward the construction of a CIP project.
- *Grants:* Most frequently, grant funding comes in the form of matching funds from federal or state agencies and has included Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) transportation grants for nonmotorized mobility and the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office's various grant programs. Other federal and state programs may also offer grant opportunities.

**CIP-101** King County will encourage and pursue partnerships with other agencies, jurisdictions and the private sector to maximize funding of the park, trail and open space system and its resources.

**CIP-102** King County will leverage its funding through outside resources, including the aggressive pursuit of grants, outside funding sources, and partnerships.

## 5.2 Planning, Acquisition and Development

King County will use this Open Space Plan as a guide for planning, acquisition and design decisions for the development and enhancement of the open space system.

- CIP-103 King County will plan, acquire, develop, restore and enhance open space sites and recreation facilities as appropriate, including recreation and multi-use sites, regional trails, natural area parks and forest lands, to further the vision and goals of this plan.
- CIP-104 King County will plan and develop facilities that encourage multiple public uses and benefits and will work to reduce user conflicts while minimizing impacts to natural resources.
- CIP-105 King County will systematically apply the open space classification system to sites in its inventory, along with use area designations of county open space lands to clearly facilitate appropriate use, programming, development, maintenance, and stewardship.
- CIP-106 King County will coordinate open space planning, acquisition and development with other county projects and programs and with other agencies and organizations that may provide mutual benefits.

### 5.2.1 Planning

King County pursues a variety of planning activities that are coordinated with and build upon each other to further the goals of the open space system.

- CIP-107 King County will evaluate and update the King County Open Space Plan when necessary to address changing conditions such as system growth, respond to new initiatives, and remain eligible for grant opportunities.
- CIP-108 King County will evaluate and update the Regional Trails Needs Report (RTNR) and engage in other regional trail planning efforts to respond to changing conditions and needs, provide a viable capital development program, and remain eligible for grant opportunities.
- CIP-109 As soon as possible after acquisition and prior to significant development, use or large scale restoration of a site, King County will prepare a site management plan, site master plan, or development plan for each open space site. These individual plans should identify appropriate types and levels of public access, necessary rules of use, and required stewardship, including maintenance, restoration, monitoring and enforcement needed for public enjoyment, resource conservation, safety and liability. King County will prepare interim maintenance plans for all new acquisitions to address basic resource protection, public access and safety.
- CIP-110 Site Management Guidelines for natural area parks and Forest Stewardship Plans for forest lands will be guided by the *King County Ecological Lands Handbook for Natural Areas* and the *Programmatic Plans for Management of King County-owned Ecological Lands*. They will also be informed by the various regional and backcountry trails planning documents and best available science.

- CIP-111** Future management actions for open space sites shall be consistent with their individual plans. Changes in conditions, such as increased public use or acquisition of new land, will require evaluation and periodic updating of these plans.

Planning should also consider the potential for redevelopment, restoration and enhancement of existing sites and facilities as an especially important strategy to maximize the recreation and resource values and revenue generating potential of existing sites. Recognition of an adaptive strategy for use and management of open space lands provides for appropriate long-term public benefit and health of the system.

- CIP-112** King County should monitor open space use patterns as background for future planning efforts, including how open space sites serve the public benefit and what are subsequent recommendations to enhance or restore individual sites to increase their benefit to King County's open space system and its goals and vision.

#### **5.2.1.1 Active Recreation Planning**

King County, as well as many other local jurisdictions, have created or converted new athletic fields at sites throughout the county in recent years. Considering population growth and other demographics trends, it is important to understand and monitor the need for these types of facilities and ways in which the facilities can be built and maintained that maximize resources and serve the greatest public benefit. King County currently achieves this in part through partnership-based programs such as the Community Partnerships and Grants Program and Youth Sports Facilities Grants.

- CIP-113** King County should work with athletic organizations, school districts and the public to identify active recreation facility needs and coordinate funding strategies.

#### **5.2.1.2 Regional Trails Planning**

King County's long-term capital program for expansion and enhancement of its regional trails system is found in the *King County Regional Trails Needs Report (RTNR)*, which serves as King County's official long-term plan for the Regional Trails System. The RTNR provides guidance for development of King County's components of the overall regional trails network. This plan is based upon previous regional trails plans including the *Regional Trail Inventory and Implementation Guidelines (2004)*, the *King County Regional Trails Plan (1992)*, and the *King County Urban Trails Plan (1971)*. These plans recognize the regional trails system as a major element of King County's open space system. They are the result of regional planning processes that identified trail routes, trail types, development policies and cost estimates.

Coordination and/or partnerships with local cities in planning for the regional trails system are important to King County, as regional trails that pass through city jurisdictions play an important and growing role in the overall trails system.

- CIP-114** King County should provide regional leadership and coordination for the planning, design, implementation and maintenance of the countywide Regional Trails System to ensure regional trail connections between jurisdictions and linkages with other local trails.

### **5.2.1.3 Habitat Planning**

Planning for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife habitat and native biodiversity provides valuable information that contributes to the planning and management of open space sites, especially for natural area parks and forest lands. This type of planning also informs decisions regarding how best to provide appropriate public access and appropriate recreational activities at an open space site.

**CIP-115 King County will continue fish and wildlife planning efforts through individual site management plans and maintenance plans to ensure biodiversity values are an integral part of open space decisions.**

### **5.2.1.4 Backcountry Trails Planning**

Planning for backcountry trails helps to ensure that such trails are properly located and constructed to accommodate and balance appropriate uses. Planning can also help identify the need for and location of backcountry trail support infrastructure such as trailheads, parking lots, kiosks, signage, and restrooms. Public involvement with trail user groups and other agencies providing similar nearby recreational opportunities should be a critical part of the planning process.

**CIP-116 King County should develop a backcountry trails plan that establishes protocols for and guides planning, design, construction, and maintenance of backcountry trails on King County's open space sites.**

### **5.2.1.5 Planning Tools**

Having a variety of information about park sites and the overall open space system landscape is critical for planning and stewardship of the system, lending importance to maintaining a site specific database and employing tools such as Geographic Information System.

An inventory should include information such as purchase information, funding records, historic site development and survey information, master plans, site management guidelines, site plans and specifications, site conditions including site improvements and maintenance requirements. Such an inventory will facilitate King County's property acquisition, planning, property management, development review, project development, stewardship, restoration and scheduling responsibilities.

**CIP-117 King County will maintain a comprehensive site inventory, in coordination with other county inventories, databases and information provided by Geographic Information System (GIS) tools.**

### **5.2.1.5 External Influences**

Outside activities can affect the open space system. This may be a result of new local, state or federal legislation or regulations, planning proposals from other agencies or from private sector development proposals. Participation in the development and review of these proposed actions is important to ensure the future enhancement, protection and sustainability of the open space system.

**CIP-118 King County will review legislation, codes, regulations and land use and development proposals, to ensure the full range of open space issues and impacts are addressed.**

**CIP-119 King County will pursue opportunities for participation with the private sector in the development process to further open space goals.**

### **5.2.2 Acquisition**

The lands that are added to the open space system enrich the quality of life in the county and contribute to a public lands legacy for future generations. Anticipated growth in King County will bring additional pressures to preserve all types of open spaces for their multiple benefits and recreational opportunities. Limited public funds make every acquisition decision important. Acquisition decisions must consider the implications of future development, use and management, the need for protecting and restoring natural resources, and the importance of conserving ecologically important areas.

Open space acquisitions for conservation or recreation goals that are informed by a systems-based, landscape level strategy maximize ecological and public benefits, as resources such as rivers, wetlands, or habitat corridors seldom reflect human-made jurisdictional boundaries. The need for habitat connectivity and continuity of the regional trails network are both examples of where land uses cross jurisdictional boundaries.

- CIP-120 King County will emphasize acquisition of sites that provide for multiple benefits and functions.**
- CIP-121 King County's open space acquisitions should be consistent with the goals of this plan.**
- CIP-122 King County should work with adjacent jurisdictions, local, state and federal governments, tribes, and landowners during the formation of acquisition strategies to identify acquisition priorities to protect systemic goals not bound by jurisdictional and property boundaries.**
- CIP-123 Acquisitions of lands that are of adequate size to achieve the acquisition purpose and/or those that provide continuity or appropriate public access where it does not exist should be considered priority acquisitions, as should acquisition of land or easements that are adjacent to, or provide a connection between, existing public open space lands or that are "in-holdings".**
- CIP-124 King County should acquire open space properties that provide public benefit and recreational opportunities or resource protection in proportion to the cost of acquisition, ownership, development and management.**
- CIP-125 King County will acquire, protect and conserve high priority sites through a variety of means, including fee simple purchase, donations and purchase of conservation easements and covenants, as well as through the use of the Transfer of Development Rights Program.**
- CIP-126 King County will prepare a site acquisition evaluation of potential open space lands before they are acquired to evaluate short and long-term stewardship funding needs and availability and ensure the lands are appropriate for the intended use and contribute to larger open space goals.**
- CIP-127 King County will strive to protect through fee acquisition or easements lands that have high ecological value with unique or otherwise significant habitat features where development would negatively impact important ecological functions.**
- CIP-128 Distribution, spatial structure, and diversity of native wildlife and plant populations and communities should be taken into account when acquiring conservation easements or land.**

Examples of lands with high ecological value that warrant enhanced protection include, but are not limited to: aquatic areas, wetlands and buffers, bogs and fens, marine beaches, intertidal and subtidal habitat and riparian zones, lands that protect and conserve headwater and upland forest cover, high priority habitats identified in WRIA Plans, Regionally Significant Resource Areas and Locally Significant Resource Areas, designated Wildlife Habitat Networks, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas, priority habitats listed by the Washington State DFW, Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas, 100-year floodplains, and channel migration hazard areas. In addition, distribution, spatial structure, and diversity of native wildlife and plant populations will be taken into account when acquiring conservation easements or land.

Appendix VII presents additional acquisition considerations for King County when evaluating potential open space acquisitions.

### **5.2.3 Design and Development**

Early participation in review of development proposals can result in mutual benefits to the community and neighborhood by ensuring appropriate levels of recreation development and protection of natural resources while providing predictability in the early stages of the review process. Safe, environmentally-sensitive and cost effective design of site development, restoration or enhancement projects is a major responsibility in public projects. The following policies demonstrate King County's commitment in the development and approval of capital projects.

- CIP-129 King County will prepare site designs and specifications for the development, enhancement or restoration of an open space site to ensure consistency with the goals and policies of this plan and individual site plans. This includes accordance with project program plans, site management plans and guidelines, forest stewardship plans or master plans.**
- CIP-130 King County will design, develop, restore and maintain sites to encourage the safe use and public enjoyment of the county's open space sites, while protecting and enhancing their natural resources.**
- CIP-131 King County is committed to the design and development of accessible sites and recreation facilities.**
- CIP-132 King County will demonstrate fiscal responsibility in its review and approval of design and development to balance development costs with long term operational costs and public benefits.**

Regulatory compliance is a required element of any project, resulting in increased public safety and resource protection. For example, King County's backcountry trail programmatic permit has reduced permitting costs and staff labor hours and helped facilitate consistent trail design and construction standards while ensuring compliance with critical areas ordinances. This has resulted in enhanced stewardship of natural resources and increased appropriate recreation use of open space sites.

- CIP-133 King County will maintain, develop and restore open space sites consistent with all local, state and federal regulatory permit requirements. Programmatic permits, where allowed and appropriate, will be pursued when such permits increase cost effectiveness and increase project success.**

### 5.2.3.1 Unified Design

A unified design program is cost effective in terms of minimizing future design and maintenance costs. Standardization minimizes replacement and repair costs, reduces part and supply inventories and simplifies maintenance. It also promotes an identifiable image for the system.

- CIP-134** King County will develop and implement design standards and details which promote a unified, identifiable image of the county's open space system.
- CIP-135** High priority will be given to aesthetic considerations in the design and development of open space sites. Designs will be evaluated based on color, scale, style, and materials appropriate for their proposed use. Development should be consistent with the site's role and purpose in the system and blend with surroundings and the natural environment.
- CIP-136** When appropriate and feasible, open spaces should include educational and interpretive signage or other features which enhance a user's understanding and enjoyment of a site and its features and resources.

### 5.2.3.2 Regional Trails

Development of the King County Regional Trails System is based on guidance from the *King County Regional Trails System Development Guidelines*, the *American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* and other professionally-recognized guidelines such as the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) local roadway standards. These guidelines provide technical guidance for on-going development of regional trails and are updated periodically to incorporate best available trail development engineering and design/development practices.

- CIP-137** Regional trails should be developed in accordance with the most recent edition of the *King County Regional Trails System Development Guidelines*, the *American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, or other appropriate state or national professional guidelines.
- CIP-138** Site-specific plans should be prepared for regional trail corridors in King County based on the priority guidance provided by the *Regional Trails Needs Report*. These plans may include feasibility studies, trail designs, construction materials, and environmental mitigation. To the degree possible new trail planning activities should include public outreach to ensure important community involvement in the development of the Regional Trails System.

### 5.2.3.4 Backcountry Trails

- CIP-139** King County should develop and design backcountry trails in a manner that protects natural resources, ensures public safety, and requires minimal maintenance. The latest versions of the *USDA Forest Service Trails Management Handbook* and *USDA Forest Service Specifications for the Construction of Trails* should inform construction and management of King County's backcountry trails.